



THE INFLUENCE OF ECOPSYCHOLOGY ON THE COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD'S PERSONALITY

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Abstract:

This article discusses one of the youngest branches of psychology—ecopsychology. It explores the scientific foundations of how nature affects individuals and society, and vice versa, while also revealing the essence of ecopsychology as a discipline.

Keywords: Environment, ecopsychology, methodology, extreme situations, labor psychology, human ecology, safety psychology, global ecology, ontogenesis.

In the 21st century, few are surprised by rockets reaching other planets, landing there, capturing images, and retrieving soil and rock samples. Yet, it's astonishing how some people view the drying of the Aral Sea or the melting of the Arctic Ocean as normal, showing extreme indifference.

Solar flares and magnetic storms may have surrounded Earth in the early 20th century, but humanity was largely unaware. Hot summers also occurred then, but the Arctic didn't melt at this rate. Nor were schoolchildren absorbing scientific knowledge so poorly or emotionally overreacting to trivial things—yet today, such phenomena are increasingly common. Many of these extreme situations are now being noted more frequently by scholars in human sciences.

Ecopsychology, as a field, scientifically analyzes the mutual influence between humans and nature—the damage people inflict on the environment and how environmental changes, in turn, affect human psychology.

The subject of ecopsychology focuses on the relationship between human behavior and the environment—specifically, the consistent behavioral phenomena tied to particular locations. Although the scope of ecopsychology may seem limited today, it resembles a complex, interdisciplinary network of knowledge about humans and the world.



The diversity of ideas and approaches within environmental (eco) psychology indicates that it may be too early to define it as a full-fledged discipline. For some, it's merely a subset of personality psychology; for others, it's a set of pedagogical or psychotherapeutic tools. Still, others view it as a new field aimed at developing principles that influence human behavior.

Some scholars recognize ecopsychology as an independent field, while others elevate it to the level of a leading meta-discipline of our time.

Indeed, many experts acknowledge ecopsychology as a promising paradigm. Within its interdisciplinary scope—drawing both from within and beyond the field—some key subfields have emerged:

- **Human Ecology:** Examines laws of interaction between humans and the environment, promotes health, and develops psychophysical capabilities.
- **Labor Psychology:** Studies work as an ecological-social and psycho-ecological phenomenon and analyzes the ecological safety of labor.
- **Pedagogical Psychology:** Explores problems of ecological education and personal development.
- **Safety Psychology:** Deals with issues of ecological safety and how to ensure it.
- **Social Ecology:** Investigates ecological awareness and the cognitive-psychological aspects of environmental knowledge.
- **Global Ecology:** Studies ontogenesis and sustainable development.
- **Cultural Ecology:** Examines the interaction between cultural-civilizational processes and the environment.

Ecopsychology can be considered an inseparable part of applied ecology—specifically, the psychological component of solving ecological problems. As a scientific field at the intersection of human ecology and psychology, ecopsychology forms its research agenda within this interdisciplinary context.

Levels of Ecopsychological Issues

Ecopsychological problems can be classified into three conditional levels:

First-level tasks include:

- Studying environmental conditions that protect and support human mental health;



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- Determining maximum permissible levels of various environmental parameters;
- Assessing different types of environmental pollution and their “psychological” effects, including through psychological evaluation methods.

Second-level tasks include:

- Studying the psychological traits that determine whether activity is entropic (destructive) or extropic (creative);
- Developing psychodiagnostic tools to assess and foster ecological orientation in individuals;
- Conducting ecological-psychological analyses of activities and addressing ecological labor psychology issues.

Third-level tasks include:

- Investigating the psychological issues of noospherogenesis—a natural process that, ecopsychologists argue, must occur under the control of human consciousness.

Practical Objectives of Ecopsychology:

- Understanding the psychological characteristics of the environment, mechanisms of “psychological pollution,” and the effects of natural and man-made disasters on human mental states;
- Psychological, medical, and social rehabilitation of the population—including the role of traditional culture and religion in the recovery process;
- Addressing the socio-psychological and ethno-psychological aspects of geopolitics;
- Assessing the impact of ecological and geographical factors on human psychophysiological traits and developing unified criteria for evaluating ecological situations;
- Conducting medical-ecological and eco-psychological expertise of social-ecological systems;
- Spreading ecological knowledge and raising awareness among the public and scientific communities using psychotechnical tools;
- Evaluating the role of individual and personal traits in solving various ecological problems.



Current Ecopsychological Research Areas:

1. Studying environmental consciousness, particularly how people perceive their surroundings and identifying factors that negatively influence this perception;
2. Investigating motivations behind environmental behavior, including reasons people harm or try to protect the environment;
3. Analyzing the psychological consequences of environmental issues;
4. Developing psychological advocacy tools to promote appropriate perceptions and behaviors regarding ecological challenges.

Ecopsychology examines ecological consciousness through three key lenses:

- Sociogenesis
- Ontogenesis
- Functional genesis

It is essential to understand that ecological consciousness integrates intellectual and emotional components of world perception, such as reflection, thinking, awareness, relationships, evaluation, cognition, emotions, experience, and behavior. It includes scientific and religious worldviews and the human relationship with nature and the cosmos.

Thus, the psychological aspect of consciousness is broader and richer than its social-philosophical dimension.

Key Methodological Features of Ecopsychology:

1. It has a distinct methodology.
2. Nature is seen not merely as an environment, but as a living organism, encompassing unity, diversity, and uniqueness.
3. Nature is perceived subjectively—as a sentient being, not an object.
4. Ecopsychology integrates methodologies from leading psychological fields such as general, developmental, social, medical, and pedagogical psychology.

As we near the end of the first quarter of the 21st century—an era defined by information overload and environmental unpredictability—understanding the subtle influences of ecopsychology on individual well-being has become a critical task. Failing to study our relationship with the natural world, including something as simple as our attitude toward green spaces, could lead to irreversible consequences for future generations.



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While we often teach youth about hygiene and spiritual cleansing, we must also instill respect and responsibility for the nature that houses both their bodies and souls. If we neglect this, future generations may judge us harshly.

Without turning ecological awareness into a core part of youth culture, we may end up with a planet inhabited only by humans. Eventually, even plants may abandon it. And who follows next—you already know.

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