

# Environmental and Ethical Education and Upbringing in Russia and Belarus

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**Abstract**—The development of environmental ethics, eco-ethical education and upbringing in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus comes with a kind of division of labour: in Russia the emphasis is on the development of theoretical issues, and Belarus is a leader in the organization of teaching this discipline. International cooperation gives positive results and new challenges.

**Keywords**—*environmental ethics; education; upbringing; Russia; Belarus*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The aggravation of the environmental situation in the world, which has been taking place in recent decades, has led to an increase of the attention to environmental ethics and the education of moral attitudes towards the nature [1].

Since the early 1970s, environmental ethics have been claimed to be an independent theoretical discipline and then — became a subject of study in a number of foreign universities. In the Soviet Union at that time, environmental ethics did not exist as a discipline, although theoretical researches started in this and adjacent areas of science and in philosophy. And until now, in many universities in Russia and other countries of the post-Soviet space, the introduction of such training courses as a way of forming an environmentally oriented worldview is considered only in the future. Environmental and ethical education and education in high school is carried out mainly through ecology, philosophy, ethics and other disciplines, as well as in extracurricular work with students [2].

At the same time, the positive results in the development of theoretical issues of environmental ethics in Russia, Belarus and other countries of the post-Soviet space should be noted, as well as the experience of teaching this discipline in separate universities, first of all, Belarusian. For further

development of these trends, there are not only challenges of time, but also prerequisites, including those which are related to the strengthening of international relations and cooperation.

## II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGICAL ETHICS AND THE UPRISING OF MORAL RELATIONS TO THE NATURE IN RUSSIA

Theoretical ideas and the practices of upbringing the moral attitude to the nature have their prehistory in Russia.

Thus, V.S. Solovyov, from the point of view of theocentrism, wrote about the overcoming in the distant future of the self-interested attitude of man to the nature in the future society: "When self-interest will not reign in public relations between people, it will stop dominating in human relations towards nature. Even in theocracy the material nature will serve humans, and much more than now, but this service will be based on mutual love. Nature will obey humans with love, and humans will care for nature with love" [3]. A deep and rich theoretical legacy was left by Russian cosmists, in particular, V.I. Vernadsky in the doctrine about the noosphere.

G.S. Batishchev wrote about the positive values and logic of the formation of the theocentric type of world outlook in the second half of the 20th century. He developed ideas of environmentalization of science on the basis of the theory of deep communication. According to A.N. Kochergin, in 1961 Batishchev expressed the idea of the necessity to treat nature as a subject, anticipating the principle of subjective-subject relations in ecoethics. From a different ideological position — naturocentism — the nature was considered in the works of I.B. Novik and K.D. Kuzmin as a subject of relations with humans. From their point of view, a person should be able to put himself in the position of an object in his relation to the

nature — as a subject. Subsequently, Novik comes to the understanding of the illusiveness of human's attempts to change his nature under the influence of changing conditions of the environment.

With experience of the influence of Novik and Batishchev, V.I. Falco substantiates the principle of subjective-subject relations of human and nature from the standpoint of eco-centrism, which presupposes a dialogical, synergistic interaction of a person with a connatural Diverse [4] [5]. One of the reasons for this point of view is the idea of a moral understanding of nature by V.A. Petritsky. The subjective-subject relations of human and nature are defined as the most important principle of ecoethics in a textbook, which is prepared by a team of authors from several countries under the guidance of T.V. Mishatkina and published under the auspices of UNESCO [6]. The subjective-subject relationship of human and nature determines and makes possible the formation of moral values of eco-ethics around two rods: feelings of love and compassion for nature and feelings of time, suggesting the tendency about the natural conditions for future generations, as it was pointed out by Aldo Leopold.

The idea of unity of the society and the nature was expressed by E.V. Girusov even during the Soviet period. In 1989, being the speaker at the All-Union Scientific Symposium on Global Morality, he justified the provision on the natural basis of morality. In his works he formulated and justified the socio-ecological laws of connatural development. Developing the concept of co-evolution of society and nature, N.N. Moiseyev justified the moral and environmental imperative, which requires the movement from the anthropocentric idea of human predominance over nature to the idea of their coexistence, and other postulates that have entered the courses in social ecology, ethics and other academic disciplines.

A group of Russian philosophers headed by Y.V. Oleinikov developed and published in 1993 the "Environmental Codex of Russia (Environmental Ethics)", which in recent years has been actively discussed again in the press and at environmental forums to accept it as a declaration and to codify it by law. The central idea of the Codex is the Golden Rule of morality in the relationship between human and nature: "The Network of Environmental Ethics: treat the nature as you wish, so that you are treated!"; "Treat the nature as if the consequences of actions concern you personally!" [7].

The development of environmental ethics in studies that correlate ecoethics as an applied theory with a general philosophical ethic is raised to a new theoretical level. As a part of the UNESCO program, the Ethics Sector of the RUSSIAN Academy of Sciences (R.G. Apresyan) has developed general and practical principles of environmental ethics. General principles of environmental ethics include respect for all forms of life, biodiversity, biosphere sustainability, environmental justice, precautionary principles and the common heritage of natural resources. The practical principles of environmental ethics include: the rights of future generations, shared responsibility, the

"presumption of danger," reduction and convergence. As a kind of applied ethics prof. Apresyan proposes to investigate environmental ethics as a complex of systematic and well-founded moral ideas about the relationship between human and nature.

At the beginning of the new century in Russia, the impulse is given to the practical implementation of theoretical developments in educational and upbringing work. For several years (2004–2007), within the framework of the HESP project and the project "Improving Ethics Teaching in the Higher Education System", coordinated by the Department of Ethics of the Institute of Philosophy of Russian Academy of Sciences, the seminars in Kaunas, Kiev, Minsk were held for young teachers of Russian ethics, as well as Summer international schools in Moscow region. Such well-known ethics as R. Holmes, T. Govier, A.A. Huseynov, leading scientists in the field of bioethics B.G. Yudin, P.D. Tishchenko, experts from other republics of the former Soviet Union. The result of this work was a collection of scientific reports "Ethics and Ecology", published under the support of the UNESCO Moscow Office [8].

A number of centres dealing with environmental ethics are formed in Russia. Over the course of many years the most authoritative Centre for the development of theoretical problems of applied ethics (including environmental ethics) is the Research Institute for Applied Ethics at the Tyumen State Oil and Gas University. The development of ethical thoughts, all over the Russia and former Soviet Union republics, is reflected in "Vedomosti", regularly published by Scientific Research Institute of Ecology Problems, edited by famous ethics of Russia — prof. V.I. Bakshtanovsky and Y.V. Soghomonov [9].

Under the auspices of IF RAS and the Centre for Practical and Research Ethics of North Carolina University (USA) the Mordovia State University after N.P. Ogareva (Saransk, Prof. A.A. Sychev, M.D. Martynova) becomes the centre for the development of the method of teaching of environmental ethics in Russia.

Theoretical and applied issues of environmental ethics were discussed and deeply developed at several Congresses on Ecoethics at the Bauman Moscow State Technical University, which took place in the first decade of the 21st century and gathered hundreds of participants from amongst the scientists and teachers of universities. Philosophical and methodological problems of the formation of ecological outlook are the focus of the Moscow State University of the Forest (now it is — Bauman Moscow State Technical University Mytishi Branch). Ideas of environmental ethics are discussed here at the annual "EcoWorld" International Scientific Conferences, as well as on the pages of the magazine "Forestry Bulletin" and conference materials collections. The last two conferences were held jointly by the Bauman Moscow State Technical University and its Mytishi Branch. That expanded the range of universities and scientific organizations, which are the part of the network community.

A significant role in the development of eco-ethical training and the education of a moral attitude to the nature

has the All-Russian Conferences on Environmental Education, held by the Non-Governmental Environmental Fund named after V.I. Vernadsky together with the Russian Environmental Academy, headed by V.A. Grachev and in collaboration with other organizations. Environmental ethics is the subject of the activities of the Social Ecology Section of the REA (E.V. Girusov, N.M. Mamedov).

The "Environmental Development Technologies" platform operates since 2011 in the Russian State Hydrometeorological University (St. Petersburg). Scientific and practical conferences with the participation of leading experts from CIS countries are held. Both state and private public organizations are dealing with environmental ethics problems in Russia. Thus, the International Social Movement "ECOERA" regularly arranges the Forums "Ecology for Life: Integration and Development for Future Generations" with awarding of the National Environmental Award "ERAECO". Environmental forums and other activities are also being held to discuss eco-ethics.

The leading role in the theoretical and methodological implementation of the state policy in the field of environmental education and upbringing in the higher and secondary schools is played by the Russian Academy of Education, in particular, the Scientific Council on Ecological Education and Upbringing, such scientists of the Institute for Strategy of Education Development of the Russian Academy of Education as A.N. Zakhlebny, E.N. Dzyatlovskaya, A.A. Mamchenko and others.

The importance of international relations is growing, in particular, with one of the leaders in the organization of ecoethical education in the CIS and Eastern Europe — the International Sakharov Environmental Institute of Belarusian State University, as well as with UNESCO. Cooperation with the ISEI BSU in the field of the theory and practice of eco-ethics is manifested, in particular, in conducting comparative sociological research, which allows assessing the impact of studying ecological disciplines and eco-ethics or courses, including its problems, on students' eco-culture. Monitoring of eco-culture and moral values of student youth in universities in Russia and Belarus shows a high correlation between the level of ecological culture and moral attitude to the nature in both countries, which is established by eco-ethical education and upbringing. [10]

### III. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ETHICAL EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING IN RUSSIA AND REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

The formation of a new type of environmental consciousness and value system is carried out in the Republic of Belarus in the process of environmental and ethical education, the conceptual model of which is determined by a number of general and regional factors. Here they are:

First, the relevance, necessity and urgency of solving environmental problems on a global and regional scale as a universal factor; in Belarus, it is also regional peculiarities of environmental problems associated with the post-Chernobyl situation;

Second, low level of ethical-environmental awareness and culture of "the average citizens", professionals — "natural resource users" and people, who takes responsible decisions — as a universal factor;

Third, at the same time, the awareness by the human community in the conditions of the ecological crisis that the solution of environmental problems depends on mentality and the level of environmental culture of society [11];

Forth, problems and difficulties of the theoretical plan and the principal features of the environmental and ethical education itself, in particular [12]:

- the necessity to take into account in this area the indissoluble unity of rational-logical, analytical and emotional-sensual beginnings and therefore — empathy, appeal to feelings of love and pity for natural objects that need protection and care: "do not be afraid to be ridiculed for sentimentality," urged A. Schweitzer;
- the necessity of the continuity of the ecological and ethical education, which should be carried out "always and everywhere": in the "time" (from preschool age to the advanced training system of "mature" users of nature) and "spatial" aspects (throughout the country);
- search and use of non-trivial interactive forms and methods of training (case-study, role-playing games; not only in the classroom, but also in extra-curricular forms).

Today, the process of environmentalization of the education in the Republic is aimed at ensuring its continuity, starting from the elementary grades of school. Integrated environmental courses launched in the programs of basic and secondary schools, vocational, secondary special and higher educational institutions. Taking into account the age of children, environmental aspects are included into the programs of the educational process, even of some kindergartens. Considerable experience of environmental training and education of students has been gained by extracurricular institutions, in particular, the Republican Environmental Centre for Children and Youth. In general, the system of supplementary education for children and young people of environmental and biological profile unites 19 ecological centres and about 2500 clubs of environmental and biological profile, in which over than 30,000 students take training (- 3%). Such institutions are innovative platforms where students' experiential, practical, research activities under the guidance of scientists and practicing teachers give rise to new educational methods and contribute to the attainment of personal social responsibility. Over than 500 schools became SPARE schools (School project for the use of resources and energy), and more than 200 schools received the status of "Green Schools".

At the higher school level, environmental courses were also included in the mandatory list of disciplines, scientific and methodological councils were created leading to the development of environmental-related educational standards.

Training of environmental specialists in Belarus is carried out in a number of universities. A special role in the formation and development of environmental and ethical education is played by the International Sakharov Environmental Institute of Belarusian State University (ISEU BSU), created by the Government of Belarus in Minsk on the initiative of scientists of the BSU and supported by the Sakharov Committee as a response to the challenge of Chernobyl. It is a response to the necessity and need for a broad eco-ethical educational activity. Today ISEU is the head of the Educational Methodological Association of Higher Schools of the Republic on the Environmental Education and it is the basic organization of the CIS member states on environmental education.

The university has a special, "exclusive" biography. The commitment of the university to the principles of the four "inter" was declared initially: international, interactive, interpretation, interdisciplinary. So it is: international, built on the principles of interaction, interpreting various scientific points of view and meanings for students, based in the educational and scientific activities on the most unexpected interdisciplinary connections. It is the orientation towards interdisciplinarity as the most promising way of scientific research that allowed us to be the first in the post-Soviet space to turn to the idea of studying environmental ethics in an environmental university.

We have developed a special environmental and ethical educational program, which involves combining "sentimentality", an appeal to the feelings of love and compassion for nature, with the analysis of real situations and the ability to make responsible decisions; the motion from general principles of environmental ethics to specific technologies for solving problems; based on ethical principles of minimizing evil and the maximum goodness, on the search for compromises between the interests of human and nature.

In accordance with the Program, the 20-hour course "Fundamentals of Environmental Ethics" was introduced at ISEU. The goal of the course is to give to students, who are future ecologists, biologists and physicians, the conscious moral attitude towards nature, towards the Other Living, activity-related and reverential attitude towards the Life — of Human and the Other Living, sustainable orientation and readiness to be guided by the principles and norms of environmental ethics in future practical activities. An important role is played by the use of traditional and non-standard interactive techniques.

The ecological and ethical educational program and the introduction of the course "Basics of Environmental Ethics" demanded serious methodological support. A network of experts in the field of environmental and ethical education has been created in the republic. The curricula developed for continuous eco-and bioethical education, provided with guidelines, educational and methodological complexes for university students in the courses of "Environmental Ethics" and "Biomedical Ethics"; Methodical Recommendations on the organization of environmental and ethical education of specialists and public education. Thanks to the cooperation

with UNESCO, it became possible to prepare, publish and distribute in educational institutions of Belarus educational materials and manuals on environmental ethics [6] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18].

Public approbation and discussion of the problems of environmental and ethical education and enlightenment in the republic are carried out at republican and international events for teachers and students (scientific conferences, seminars, summer schools). In the framework of the International Scientific and Practical Conferences "Sakharov Readings: Environmental Problems of the 21st Century", which are held annually by ISEU with the invitation of specialists from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and other countries of the commonwealth, the work of the sections and roundtables on the problems of environmental ethics and eco-ethical education is organized.

Mastering the basics of environmental ethics is carried out by humanizing the study of special disciplines. Thus, some sections of ecoethics and bioethics are integrated into special courses of radiobiology and environmental medicine. Experiments on laboratory animals were completely replaced at the institute by alternative methods (demonstration of educational and scientific films, dummies, biomodels, computer training programs, etc.). An optional special course "Alternatives to the use of experimental animals in education".

Ethical and environmental education has required to expand the scope of the formation of the personality of a specialist in extracurricular time. Students are invited to participate in scientific conferences, round tables, press conferences on ethical and environmental issues, their best reports and scientific papers are published in collections of materials.

The EcoUni Association operates in the institute, being created on the initiative of students. Its goal is to involve students in educational activities in the field of ecology and nature conservation. EcoUni participants initiated an educational project "Human. Ecology. Bioethics" for schoolchildren and pre-schoolers, which was tested by volunteer students in kindergartens and gymnasiums in Minsk.

The project was awarded a diploma and a National Environmental Prize, and its programs were included in the UNESCO project "Environmental Ethics in the System of Bioethical Education of the Republic of Belarus". On the basis of their own experience, EcoUni members prepared an educational and methodological manual "Bioethics and Ecoethics for School and Out-of-School Education". Subsequently, the project was expanded to include an educational program for students of biomedical specialties "Alternatives to animal experiments". EcoUni activists held a scientific and practical seminar with international participation — "Humanization of medical and biological specialists training". It was dedicated to the protection of animals in the educational process and researches. EcoUni Association signed a cooperation agreement with InterNICHE — the International Network for Humane



Education, became its official partner and received a grant to implement a project to humanize education.

Also, ISEU conducts broad ethical and environmental educational activities. As volunteers, students and graduates of the institute carry out "ethical and environmental patronage" in schools; they make films and clips with eco-agitational sense. They take part in thematic film festivals, collaborate with the republican magazines "Ecologist and I" and "Animal World", participate in the publication of the student collection "Poetic Sugarization", which demonstrates the authors' ability to have a non-trivial view of the world, without which the modern environmental thinking is impossible.

The ethical and environmental education activities of the ISEU are carried out and internationally recognized. In particular, under the auspices of UNESCO, ISEU implemented the project "Environmental ethics in the educational system of the Republic of Belarus". During its implementation, the ISEU educational and scientific complex "Volma" was turned into an environmental information and education Centre — for own students. It is used for advanced training and to conduct training workshops and conferences for teachers of ecology in schools and universities of Belarus and other CIS countries. With the assistance of UNESCO, an environmental park was created at the Centre with a demonstration platform. Samples of powerplants which are using renewable energy resources (wind power plants, solar panels, micro hydroelectric generating stations, wood biomass boiler), and an "ecological path" are located. To make excursions for young people along the ecological path and the demonstration site, a Park Guide was developed and instructors from the number of students were prepared. The "Immersion" of a student into an informational and educational environment that combines an ecologically clean natural environment, the latest educational and energy technologies, ethical and humanistic training and the use of national cultural and historical traditions — all this contributes to the self-development of an environmentally responsible person and its self-development.

The most modern direction of the environmental and ethical educational program was the development and implementation of the Program of transformation ISEU into a "climate neutral" university — as a response to the UN call for "climate neutrality", which means the policies of states and the way of life of people aimed at "nonmaleficence to the climate". ISEU perceived this appeal as a "guide to action", turning our environmental university into a climate-neutral university.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, for the first time in the post-Soviet space in Russia and Belarus, a conceptual model of environmental ethics has been developed. It was based on the non-anthropocentric paradigm of the relationship between human and nature, including ethical principles, norms and standards consistent with international documents and policies for the protection of the ecology of human and nature. The strategy for developing a conceptual model of environmental ethics in

the education system for sustainable development is aimed at strengthening and introducing international standards to solve ethical problems arising from the progress of science, technology and biotechnology, as well as the environmental situation in the country and the world [19] [20].

The "division of labour" that has developed spontaneously in the environmental ethics of the Eastern European region and the CIS countries, however, has become, in our opinion, very productive. It allowed to take care about the formation of environmental consciousness, which is provided, in our opinion, only by continuous and massive environmental and ethical education: in Russia — Mordovia State University, in Belarus — to the International Sakharov Environmental Institute (now — International Sakharov Environmental Institute of Belarusian State University). At the same time, we consider environmental and ethical education as the most important priority practical component and function of environmental ethics.

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