

# Ethical Aspects of the Theory of "Green Economy"

Vitaliy Yu. Ivlev

National Research University  
Bauman Moscow State Technical University (BMSTU)  
5/1, 2nd Baumanskaya Street, Moscow, Russia 105 005  
E-mail: vitalijivlev@yandex.ru

Marina I. Ivleva

Plekhanov Russian University of Economics (PRUE)  
36, Stremyanny Lane, Moscow, Russia 117997  
E-mail: stm602@yandex.ru

Marina L. Ivleva

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia  
b. 6, Miklukho-Maklaya str., Moscow, Russia 117198  
E-mail: ivleva-ml@rudn.ru

**Abstract**—The origins, possibility, and necessity of combining an ethical approach and economic theory being researched using the example of the modern theory of the "green economy". The historical development of the ethical understanding of theoretical and economic issues in the works of prominent economists of the XIX - XX centuries, as well as the possibilities and prospects of its use in the present, is traced. The interrelation between the concept of sustainable development and ethics is traced, the specificity of scientific areas of the "green" economy within the framework of sustainable development of the economy is determined. The concept of the ecological imperative, as a fundamental principle of the theory of the "green economy", being researched, the possibility of applying the ecological imperative as the basis for the formation of a new social ideology, ethics, and morality is explained. The specificity of biocentric and anthropocentric approaches in the development of ethics from the point of view of their application in the theory of "green economy" is considered.

**Keywords**—"green economy"; ecological imperative; sustainable development; anthropocentric ethics; biocentric ethics; ecophilosophy

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most persistent problem of modern civilization is to ensure sustainable development, providing consistency and harmonious combination of exploitation of natural resources, areas of investment, trends in scientific and technological development, intensity of personal development, as well as institutional changes that transform current and future potential in order to maximize the satisfaction of human needs and requirements. The concept of sustainable development was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Development and the Environment in the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and it is still the subject of close attention of scientists. This concept, claiming the moment of the constant development of society, at the same time provides for a change in the paradigms of the traditional economy, humanization, and ecologization of its main principles, the search for common approaches and

consistency in the concepts of development of ecological and economic systems.

The generation of the flow of ecological and socio-economic consciousness of the scientific community led to the emergence of a new interdisciplinary field of applied science - the "green", or the ecological, economy.

The "green" or the ecological economy is a direction in economic science that has been formed over the past two decades, within the framework of which it is considered that the economy is a dependent component of the natural environment within which it exists and is part of it [1]. The theory of the green economy as a whole is based on three axioms:

- limited terrestrial space dictates the impossibility of an endless extension of human expansion;

- limited resources put limits to satisfaction of the infinitely growing needs;

- nature is an interconnected and interdependent system.

In the conditions of the formation of the information economy, many questions of the theory and practice of the integration of environmental factors in investment activities, in production to ensure sustainable development in market economy conditions are not solved at the moment and require further study and research both in the field of economic and social sciences and humanities [2].

The relevance of the "green economy", the need for its philosophical underpinning, the identification of its place and role in the development of modern social life are beyond doubt.

## II. ETHICAL ASPECT OF ECONOMIC THEORY IN RETROSPECTIVE

The comprehensive nature of ethics, as the science of morality, led to the fact that we can observe the ethical component in any social and humanitarian field of knowledge. The economic science is not an exception in this

process. The study of such aspect of ethics, as its place and role in economic relations, in the ideology of economic entities and market participants, has been conducted in the economy for a long time [3], and the ethical element has become one of the most important in the general trend of humanization and humanitarianization of modern society.

Adam Smith, one of the most well-known economists of the XVIII century, wrote about the great role of freedom in the social economy and its manifestations in setting the price mechanism in the conditions of the “invisible hand of the market”, as well as in the personal interest of participants in economic relations. The understanding of the desire of the human spirit for freedom and the realization of personal interest, the result of which is equilibrium in economic relations, vividly found its expression in A. Smith’s “The Theory of Moral Sentiments” (1759). However, the moral concept of freedom, in which the behavior of rational actors seeking to pursue their personal interests comes to the fore, is leveling the role of institutions and government in the process of achieving the welfare of society.

Ethical issues continued to be important in the subsequent development of economic theory. Thus, the neoclassical theory of Friedrich August von Hayek, a distinguished representative of the Austrian school, and the theory of public choice of a representative of New institutional economics (NIE) J. Buchanan touch on the themes of ethics in economics, considering the role of institutions developing under the influence of the market and the influence of consumer preferences in the economy on the behavior of institutions developing under the influence of the market. Consequently, representatives of NIE in the spirit of methodological individualism suggested that social institutions become invisible structures whose goal is, among other things, to promote rational and competing for individual values and aspirations.

The ethical perception in these theories revolves around the concept of individual freedom. It is similar to that understanding of freedom, which characterized the classical concept of natural freedom in economic transactions.

J. Keynes, following the ethical ideas advanced in the work of G. E. Moore’s “Principles of Ethics” (Principia Ethica), dreamed of developing economic science as a “maid” of ethics. Moore argued that a person’s debt is to claim justice, and actions must be evaluated in terms of ethics, not in terms of abstract values, but by the fact that if it is perfect, “the whole world will be better than if some other, the less valuable alternative is carried out by itself. Keynes opposed A. Pigou’s neoclassical concept, which claimed that the function of public welfare for the common good develops under the influence of the market. Instead of this, Keynes developed his own recommendations for a mixed economy that is developing under the influence of the state and its institutions. In this economic system, the emphasis was placed on the outside of market relations between individuals following personal interests, since, according to Keynes, indicators of the social economy as a common good could not be achieved using purely market exchange. Keynes’s economic epistemology has an idea of public spending and

the idea that the social world cannot be explained simply by referring to the probability density based on frequency. Thus, Keynes, expressing the idea of resource mobilization, is guided not by an equilibrium market price, but by institutional management. The thinker believes that both economic science and government policy should be morally responsible, based on the concept of the value of the public good [4].

In the 1970s, there were formulated two theories, in which the ethical component played a role equivalent to the economic component, namely John Rawls theory of justice (“A Theory of Justice”, 1971) and Robert Nozick (“Anarchy, State, and Utopia”, 1974). These concepts are diametrically opposed both in the ethical understanding of justice and in the matter of resource allocation in the economy.

J. Rawls argued that the neoclassical approach to distribution using the “principle of difference” in the context of social welfare becomes the second most important distribution of resources, while the influence of institutions constantly reorganizes social preferences [5]. Justice is understood by Rawls as serving the common good, approximately equal distribution of benefits and costs arising from interaction within society, which involves regulation of private property and exclusion of egoism while guaranteeing equality of rights and obligations, on the contrary, more welfare should receive the least socially protected members of society. In addition, the principle of distinction requires the existence of a “starting position” in order to establish a world of complete equality through the so-called “Rawls’ veil of ignorance”: according to his views, in order to determine the rules for the fair distribution of common resources, people participating in this process should not have information about their individual characteristics and prospects, otherwise their selfish interest will influence their behavior to the prejudice of public welfare. Ethical aspects of social justice as a distributive justice in Rawls’s model have much in common with the search for optimal allocation of resources in terms of their limited number in the theory of NIE, the main difference is in the question of the determining factor of this distribution: in the latter theory it is the presence of institutional control of resource allocation, while J. Rawls focuses on the veil of ignorance.

The point of view of R. Nozick about the distribution of resources is based on the idea of the inalienable rights of an individual to freedom and life support [6] and is close to neoclassical theories. Nozick does not take into account the egalitarian institutional distribution system, which is an important point of Rawls’ theory. The set of rights to maintenance of life, according to Nozick, is a good defined by non-institutions. Therefore, it is not subject to such conditions as moral restraint, redistribution or reduced rate relief, those conditions that are important to Rawls. On the contrary, according to Nozick, the totality of the rights to maintenance of life is determined by the market relations between free rational individuals, therefore, such a distribution of resources is fair, which is determined by free exchange by mutual agreement. The ethical component of such a distribution of resources is determined by the ethics of utilitarianism and the ethics of natural law.

### III. ECOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE AS AN ETHICAL PRINCIPLE OF THE THEORY OF THE "GREEN ECONOMY"

The "green" economy, raising questions of the existence and survival of man and nature in modern conditions, the sustainable development of society, could not pass by the ethical issues. Thus, studying the philosophical and ethical aspects of an environmental problem, N. N. Moiseev introduces the concept of "ecological imperative" (or co-evolutionary), the essence of which is to use and implement only those technologies and methods of human activity that do not destroy the conjugacy of natural biogeochemical Earth cycles [7]. The scientist emphasized that this system of norms and rules should not contradict the laws of the biosphere and the relationships established in it, it must take them into account and contribute to their preservation.

The development of any living species, any population can occur only in the hard-limited range of changes in environmental parameters. In the fair opinion of the scientist, a similar statement applies to a man. Moiseev introduces the concept of an ecological imperative, as some set of properties of the environment, depending on the characteristics of civilization, the change of which by human activity is unacceptable under any circumstances. In other words, both certain types of human activity and the degree of human impact on the environment must be strictly limited and controlled.

In undertaking a historical and philosophical analysis of the development of humanity, Moiseev notes the dependence of human destinies on natural factors throughout its history. The history of anthropogenesis can be viewed in terms of the ability of a person, his communities to accept the ecological imperative, to subordinate to him their livelihoods. An analysis of the history of Sumer, Ancient Egypt, China, and numerous other studies in this area clearly demonstrates the direct dependence of these civilizational structures and their evolution on changes in natural factors. Thus, the increase in monsoon precipitation in Abyssinia increased the spills of the Nile, and then the people went to the South and Lower Egypt became poorer and lost its significance. When the climate became drier, the spills of the Nile fell and the center of the country again moved to more fertile Lower Egypt. In ancient Sumer, an increase in anthropogenic pressure on the environment, namely, excessive irrigation of soils led to their salinization and ultimately became one of the factors that led to the disappearance of this civilization, unable to adapt to these changes [8].

Historically, human society reacted in one way or another to changes in natural conditions: new agricultural and production technologies appeared, new forms of government were developed, the distribution of socio-economic agglomerations was changed, etc. What is especially important, in the course of these processes, people developed new forms of relationship with nature and among themselves. The society formed the corresponding ethical principles of social behavior, the system of morals necessary for the preservation of its stable existence.

Similar processes of mutual adaptation of nature and society have been going on for centuries, which sometimes

constituted the whole era. The society not only adjusted itself to the surrounding nature but always, in one way or another, adjusted the nature to its needs with a certain degree of intensity. The "natural" change in the natural characteristics usually took place rather slowly on a human scale; over the previous centuries, under the influence of human activity, it could become noticeable only in the life interval of many generations [9].

Currently, the situation has changed qualitatively. Anthropogenic environmental changes significantly affect the living conditions of people during the life of one generation already. If new systems of relations between people, society and nature are not created, then humanity will quickly face the ecological planetary crisis. As Moiseev writes, "As for the present time, I believe that the decisive importance in history, society (at least, the next few decades) will play its relationship with the environment. It is they who will be the initiators of civilizational conflicts, since humanity has come to the threshold of permissible, and different civilizations will perceive the natural limitations in different ways and look for their own ways of further development. This is composed of the ecological pathos of the modern political science analysis of the current stage of the planetary development process" [10].

As part of the ecological imperative, one of the key actions in organizing the harmonious co-development of society and nature is the scientifically based regulation of biological species (including humans) within the ecological niche they occupy; human activity and behavior within acceptable limits; human relations with all components of his socio-natural environment; production, resource flows, birthrate, consumption, social protection, etc. The ecologization of the consciousness of humanity is connected with the understanding of the need for regulation. Understanding of its deep meaning is the source for comprehending the new value orientations of humanity, which form new worldviews and a new character of individual needs, motivating its aspirations to environmentally sound activities and behavior.

The ecological imperative becomes the basis for the formation of a new social ideology, a new social policy, ethics, and morality. The problem moves from the natural-ecological to the socio-cultural area. The ecological imperative cannot be ensured within the framework of the traditional scheme of the adaptation of society to the changing conditions of existence, which occur due to the life activity of the society itself. In essence, it requires the creation, in a relatively short time, of a new moral imperative, that is, new ethical principles of the relationship of people between themselves and nature [11].

Taking into account the analysis of the evolution of scientific fields of the "green" economy, it can be stated that the scientific principle of ecocentrism dominated during its formation, which implies the need to preserve the biosphere as the natural basis for life on Earth and is based on the recognition of the equivalence of the natural world and civilization, the need for their joint development (co-evolution).

The modern stage of interaction between society and nature is characterized by a sharp increase in the contradictions between developing productive forces, their impact on the environment and the ability of nature to resist the negative effects of production. Under these conditions, a fundamental feature of the modern scientific and technological revolution is its resource-conserving nature. In this regard, today the basic concept of a modern eco-economy is the concept of sustainable development, which has become a logical continuation of the ecologization of scientific knowledge and socio-economic development, which began in the 1970s, and which characterizes the new stage of development of the "green" economy as a science - the classical stage of development (professionalization of science), characterized by the fact that the "green" economy is considered as a separate link of scientific knowledge with an established criterion-categorical apparatus and methodological basis [12].

#### IV. ETHICAL ASPECT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The concept of sustainable development as a socio-philosophical concept was put forward in the report "Reshaping the International Order" made to the Rome Club by a group of scientists under the leadership of J. Tinbergen in 1980. In this report, it was concluded that the economic system cannot develop sustainably without considering the interests of social and ecological systems. Later, the definition of the concept of sustainable development was formulated in the report of the Brundtland Commission in 1987, as a development that satisfies the modern needs of humanity, at the same time, without destroying the ability to satisfy their needs for future generations.

The eco-economic crisis contributes to understanding the very concept of development [13]. Skeptics of generally accepted indicators of the development of countries in terms of GDP or other purely economic indicators show the limitations of such an approach and its inconsistency with human needs. In contrast, a number of indicators were proposed that take into account more criteria, in particular, an environmental one. Among them are the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) (1989) by Clifford Cobb, the Human Development Index (1990), which is used by the United Nations Development Program, Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) (1990), which was proposed by Herman Daly and Clifford Cobb. The indicators take into account real income per capita, equality of distribution, quality of life, the cost of unpaid work, depletion of natural resources and environmental damage. These development criteria are proposed by scientists as one of the necessary steps to overcome the ecological and economic crisis since they contribute to changing the development goals.

Currently, there are several scientific fields of the "green" economy in the framework of the sustainable development of the Russian economy:

- formation of the concept of sustainable development of the Russian economy;

- concept of eco-economic security;
- concept of regulation and quantitative assessment of eco-economic development.

The basis of such research was an attempt to develop the necessary measures to maintain eco-economic systems and create normal conditions for their effective functioning. Noting the development of human culture, representatives of the ecological economy pay special attention to the concept of the fair in the relations between generations. One of the ways to maintain sustainable development is the creation of public order, due to the so-called intertemporal agreement between the present and future generations, although not officially declared, based on management regulations (making healthy decisions by the current generation on the environment) and social heritage, which includes business entities that are passed on to future generations.

The views of eco-economists on the issue of intergenerational justice are supported by their arguments on how to meet the basic needs of modern human society. The ecological economy rejects the rational assumption of the "homo-economicus" characteristic of a market economy and the philosophy of utilitarianism, which gives primacy to the market and the analysis of "cost-benefit" when considering human needs [14].

One of the manifestations of interest in this issue is the case of H. Daly, an authoritative representative of the eco-economic approach, to clearly distinguish between the concepts of economic growth, which he interprets as unstable, constantly increasing intensity of resource use, and economic development, which is understood as a decrease in resource throughput along with reforming consumer preferences for sustainable production [15]. In accordance with these principles, reducing socio-economic ills associated with uneven development on a local and global scale could entail a shift from the neoliberal views of global economic integration to focusing on domestic production in order to develop domestic markets.

Another important item of ecological economics is the assertion that the implementation of the principle of sustainable development requires a change in the course of economic and environmental policies in order to ensure the cessation of depletion of natural capital stocks. One such change is ecological assessment, which consciously contributes environmental objects, such as biological species or ecosystems, and services, such as air and water quality, to the calculation of economic well-being. R. Constanza advocates the concept of "biophysical basis for value," which proves that social values should be based on the degree of organization of a specific evolutionary product or resource in terms of its availability for human use [16].

In addition to ecological assessment, eco-economists offer several related policy recommendations, intended primarily for government and multilateral research institutions [17]. This includes the reform of national accounting systems in order to incorporate natural capital into economic calculations; "green" taxes on environmentally harmful economic activities related to the



reduction of taxes on labor and income; investment strategies for keeping natural capital at current level; also endorsement of the “precautionary principle” (a guarantee that political decisions may have an error in preserving ecological integrity in the face of highly uncertain environmental knowledge) as the main principle of environmental policy.

## V. CONCLUSION

The value of nature as a philosophical concept becomes a stable element of philosophical discourse, starting from the XX century. Due to the passage of time, two main approaches in philosophy to its understanding have been established, which have found expression in the anthropocentric and biocentric ethics of sustainable development.

Proceeding from the biocentric ethics of sustainable development, nature has an initial intrinsic value, it is valuable in itself, like life in general and the space of existence of life; man is an important, but not the only element of nature, and to the extent that the value of nature, as such, prevails over the value of the goals and needs of man, which are limited by the framework of time and space. From the point of view of anthropocentric ethics, a man has an initial intrinsic value, in accordance with this, the value of nature is not unconditional, it arises as having relevance to a person, his needs, as well as having an influence on his well-being, value.

In this regard, within the framework of anthropocentric ethics, the ecological value of nature as a resource, having a direct impact on the quality of life and human health, the aesthetic value of nature, is distinguished as being regarded by man as beautiful, the recreational value of nature, as a necessary factor for restoring an acceptable level a person’s health who wants to recuperate, and, of course, the economic value of nature, as a source of resources for the existence and development of the economy, as a necessary condition and result of the social life of a person, in general.

In the modern world, environmental problems are aggravating due to the long-term negative impact on the environment, which has led the world to a global environmental crisis. From the above, we can conclude that we need to look for ways to overcome these problems in order to find optimal solutions by creating ecological and economic balance, using a “green” economy, “green” technologies, innovations and modernizations that will help create a harmonious union of environmental and economic components.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Vitaly Yu. Ivlev, Marina I.Ivleva, Marina L.Ivleva, “Ecological Regulation of Economy as a Concept of Social Philosophy”, *Voprosy Filosofii*, 2019 #7. P.107-117.
- [2] V.Yu. Ivlev, M.L. Ivleva and V.P. Sedyakin, "Information Metaphors and Classification of Information Sciences," Proceedings of the International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Ecological Studies (CESSSES 2018). Series “Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research”, vol. 283, pp. 874-879, 2018. DOI: 10.2991/cesses-18.2018.193
- [3] E.Barkova, M. Ivleva, O.Buzskaya, and M.Buzskij, “Ecology of culture in the space of social and humanitarian knowledge”, Proceedings of the 2017 2nd International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities (ICCESSH 2017). Series “Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research”, vol. 124, pp. 12-15, 2017. DOI: 10.2991/iccessh-17.2017.3
- [4] N.N. Gubanov and N.I. Gubanov, "Mental Bases of Social Solidarity," Proceedings of the International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Ecological Studies (CESSSES 2018). Series “Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research”, vol. 283, pp. 998-1002, 2018. DOI: 10.2991/cesses-18.2018.219
- [5] J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press, 1971.
- [6] R. Nozick *Anarchy, state and Utopia*. Blackwell Publishing, 1974.
- [7] N.N. Moiseev, *Chelovek i noosfera*. Moskva, Molodaya gvardiya, 1990.
- [8] V.A.Nekhamkin, "Synergetic and Modern Historical Knowledge: Possibilities and Limits," *Istoriya-Electronnyi Nauchno-obrazovatelnyi zhurnal*, vol. 6, no 7, 2015. DOI 10.18254/S00012222-3-1
- [9] N.N. Gubanov, N.I. Gubanov and L.O. Rokotyanskaya, "Prospects for the Development of a Universal Theory of Truth," Proceedings of the International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Ecological Studies (CESSSES 2018). Series “Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research”, vol. 283, pp. 801-805, 2018. DOI: 10.2991/cesses-18.2018.177
- [10] N.N. Moiseev, "Modern anthropogenesis and civilizational faults. Ecological and political science analysis," *Questions of Philosophy*, no. 1, pp. 3-30, 1995.
- [11] E.V. Barkova, M.I. Ivleva, O.M. Buzskaya, M.P. Buzskiy, "Profession As A Project For Modelling The Future In The Eco-Philosophical Dimension," *The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, no. 119. pp. 1101-1109, 2018.
- [12] V.Yu. Ivlev, N.D. Lepskaya, "Modalities and logic," Proceedings of the 2017 2nd International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities (ICCESSH 2017). Series “Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research”, vol. 124, pp.79-86, 2017. DOI: 10.2991/iccessh-17.2017.18
- [13] J.C.J.M. van der Bergh, *Ecological economics and sustainable development: Theory, methods and application*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1996.
- [14] N.N. Gubanov, N.I. Gubanov and L.O. Rokotyanskaya, "Factors of Black Humor Popularity," Proceedings of the International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Ecological Studies (CESSSES 2018). Series “Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research”, vol. 283, pp. 379-383, 2018. DOI: 10.2991/cesses-18.2018.85
- [15] H.E. Daly, *Beyond growth. The economics of sustainable development*. Boston, 1996.
- [16] R. Costanza (ed), *Ecological economics: the science and management of sustainability*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1991, pp. 8-9.
- [17] R. Norgaard, *Development Betrayed: The End of Progress and a Coevolutionary Revisioning of the Future*. Routledge, 1994.
- [18] V. A. Inozemtsev, M.L. Ivleva, V. Yu. Ivlev, "Artificial intelligence and problem of computer representation of knowledge," Proceedings of the 2017 2nd International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities (ICCESSH 2017). Series “Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research”, vol. 124, pp.1151-1157, 2017. DOI: 10.2991/iccessh-17.2017.268